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## And if the Shah Asks For a Neutron Bomb?

Sen. John Culver, D-Iowa, asked a good question at the hearings on the sale of AWACs to the Shah of Iran, the enterprise which makes mincemeat of President Carter's twin declarations about cutting back arms sales and honoring human rights.

What, Culver wanted to know, would happen if the shah of heaven, which he likes to be called, should suddenly fancy a neutron bomb?

Culver, the liberal heavyweight on the Armed Services Committee, was trying to focus the committee's attention on the insatiable appetite which Carter proposes to feed. The leader of Iran is a junkie who mainlines on anything that flies, shoots or is armor-clad.

Richard Nixon told him he could have anything he wanted in the defense candy store. Gerald Ford saw no reason to disappoint his best cash customer. Jimmy Carter, the new manager, told us last May that he was going to cut the business way back. No more "Arms, Unlimited."

SEVEN AWACs is not what you would call penny candy. And if Carter checks the shah's human-rights credentials, he's going to find out that the shah should get a lecture, not a consignment of the latest models off the assembly line. According to Amnesty International, the shah is holding some 7,000 political prisoners. Torture is routine.

Members of the "new spirit" team are understandably a bit on the defensive about the AWACs, which is the most sophisticated airplane ever built. They say it is a "defensive" weapon. That's what they always say when the price is right.

What it comes down to is that the shah wants them. He would be upset if denied. Gerald Ford, who never made any high-flown statements about arms sales, promised delivery, and what can Carter do? Of course, Richard Nixon promised reparations to the North Vietnamese, but we have no scruples about welshing on that particular item. The North Vietnamese have no oil.

Apologists for the deal protest that it is not true that we give him everything he asks for. Why, when he wanted 200 F11-18 planes, we were very firm in telling him they were not good for him. So when he comes back wanting AWACs, we really must oblige.

THAT'S WHEN Culver wanted to know what we would do if the shah came around and said he had to have a neutron bomb.

Culver, a former Harvard fullback who was chosen to carry the ball in the anti-B1 fight, points out that the Carter administration is handling the AWAC embarrassment in the same hole-in-the-corner manner that it managed the neutron-bomb affair.

Despite protestations of openness and cooperation with Congress, Carter seems to have made up his mind about the AWAC sale without observing "the regular order." Carter did not even consult the director of the CIA, Stansfield Turner. As with the neutron bomb, no public hearings were held. It was only after Congress sent the General Accounting Office, its own watchdog, out sniffing, that Turner's opinion was solicited.

Adm. Turner, in a classified letter, said he didn't think it was a good idea to have a plane that is not fully operational wandering over Iran's long border with the Soviet Union. A defecting Iranian crew could give the Soviets 10 years' worth of advanced technology.

IF TURNER goes before a Senate committee in secret session this week, as planned, and announces he has been "born again" about the AWAC deal, as rumored, Carter will be in trouble for having re-politicized an agency that is supposed to be depoliticized.

Rep. Gerry Studds, D-Mass., who is leading a fight in the House against the AWAC sale, which goes through unless both chambers veto it, laid out the human rights considerations for his colleagues.

"Amnesty International reports that there has been an identifiable increase in the repression of opposition within Iran and an extension of the activities of SAVAK (the Iranian secret police) to countries in which Iranians are living abroad. The torture of political prisoners during interrogation appears to be routine practice, but prisoners may also be subjected to torture again at any time during their imprisonment."

THE CARTERS suppressed any dismay they might feel on that score when the empress of Iran came to Washington and was entertained at luncheon at the White House. There was a great deal of hugging and kissing and gushing over her, and Senate wives clucked over the unfortunate amount of attention given to the hooded Iranian demonstrators who dogged her path.

Iran might not be the best place for Jimmy Carter to demonstrate that he is not kidding about human rights, but it is certainly among the top 10. The shah has the world's third largest arsenal already.

The question of why he needs more weapons is not examined. The proposition that he seeks to reconquer the ancient Persian Gulf and half the world's oil supply is advanced by Paul Erdman in an ingenious and scary new novel called "The Crash of '79." Appropriately, the climax is provided by a neutron-type bomb which the emperor has caused to be constructed from recycled plutonium.

The shah has been reported as saying the book was "crazy." All we can do is hope so.